

What can democratic theory teach us about scientific pluralism, objectivity and consensus?

Abstract: Scientific pluralism, a normative endorsement of the plurality or multiplicity of knowledge systems in science, has recently been advocated by several philosophers of science (e.g., Kellert et al. 2006, Kitcher 2002, Longino 2002, Mitchell 2009, and Chang 2010). Comparing these accounts of scientific pluralism, one will encounter quite some variation. We want to clarify the different interpretations of *scientific pluralism* by showing how they incarnate different models of democracy – our taxonomy of models of democracy is mainly inspired by the work of Chantal Mouffe.

Drawing on the parallels between models of scientific pluralism and models of democracy, we can articulate how the plurality of knowledge systems in science should interact within a democratic framework as well as how to cultivate multiple knowledge systems without getting stranded in relativism or ending up in an unwanted monism. Furthermore, democratic theory – i.e. theories of democracy – can help us stipulating how different research traditions or knowledge systems can interact in the most productive way possible, constituting the most *objective* account possible (understanding objectivity as social process). Finally, analyzing the symmetries between models of science and models of democracy will also shine light on the ideal of the *scientific consensus* (cf. Beatty 2006, Moore & Beatty 2010).

As a case-study, we scrutinize how we could use such a democratic framework to understand the plurality of models in economics, including, for instance, the debate among the orthodoxy and the heterodoxy in that discipline (cf. Van Bouwel, 2009).

References.

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